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In Memoriam.

DEA. WALTER COLTON.

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IN MEMORIAM.

DEA. WALTER COLTON,

GEORGIA, VERMONT.

FOR THE FAMILY,
BY A. M. AND G. Q. COLTON.

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Walter Colton, 1862

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IN MEMORIAM.

DEACON WALTER COLTON.

DEACON WALTER COLTON, son of Deacon Aaron Colton, was born in Longmeadow, Mass., August 25, 1764, and was baptized in the church at that place on the next day, in accordance with the custom of those times. He was a lineal descendant from George Colton, who came to this country from Sutton, England, about the middle of the seventeenth century, and settled in that part of Springfield, Mass., which, by act of the general court, was subsequently set off to be the town of Longmeadow. The name of

George Colton has honorable mention in the Springfield records as early as 1664. His autograph, in a list of grand jurymen for that year, is still preserved.

Walter's father, Aaron, was chosen to the office of deacon at the breaking out of the Revolutionary war. The country's call and the church's call pressed simultaneously. He told the church that he could not *then* accept the office, with such perils of war before him. The church by vote acceded to his suggestion, and made his acceptance contingent upon his safe return. Upon his coming back, at the close of the war, the solicitation was renewed; he accepted the office, and continued in it till his death.

Walter, the subject of this sketch, was the youngest of eight children. At the early age of thirteen, he lost his father, and was committed to the care of his eldest brother. He was soon given to

understand that thenceforth he must shift for himself, and that the old homestead—dear to him by what ties!—was not any longer to be *his* home as it had been. Coming as this did from his eldest brother, and in a somewhat harsh tone and manner, it made a strong and lasting impression on Walter's sensitive nature. It did not make him angry, but it grieved him sorely. He carried no malice from it; but the memory of it, vivid and fresh, was in him till his dying day. At the great age of ninety-six, he related the circumstances to his daughter H——, adding in his own impressive way, "I think it was very wrong." Walter went from home a mere boy, virtuous, diffident, sensitive, with a fair common-school education for those times and for one of his years; not to struggle for riches, for these were never in his dreams, but to run his chances for a living, amid the

conflicts and cold-hearted selfishness of the world. I have not at hand the *memoranda* from which to trace minutely the history of those early years. He has more than once told me the story in brief. He loved to trace with mind and tongue the good way of the Lord toward him; and he found the *duty* to do so in the first eight verses of the seventy-eighth psalm.

His summers were spent in manual labor, here and there, as opportunities occurred, and on stinted remuneration. His little stock of knowledge was increased year by year. "Through desire he sought and intermeddled with all wisdom." He had an aptitude for acquiring knowledge and for retaining it, and as the event showed, for imparting it. In no long time he was sought and approved for service in teaching a common school. Reading and spelling, arithme-

tic and English grammar—these, which are foundations, he had mastered with commendable thoroughness. He wrote an excellent hand. These labors were aided, more or less, by his love for music, and his proficiency in its science and art. I am not able to say how early his musical talents were made available as an aid in teaching. I can well believe that the day-school and the evening singing-school were wedded early, and that there were both while there was either. Of music he was passionately fond, and, not unlikely, the singing part had to him a charm potent enough to lighten many a burden of toil and care. These labors, with more or less time devoted to his trade, that of cloth weaver, which in after life he relied on as a means of support, employed his years from thirteen to twenty-four, when he came to Rutland, Vt., in expectation of more remu-

nerative employment than had offered itself to him in his native Connecticut River Valley. But disappointment awaited him here. The promises made to him were not fulfilled. The first two years in his new home were years of hardship and suffering. The country was new, and the climate was cold; or, as his son Walter said of it in 1835, "fit only for bears and badgers." He got little idea, except from the Bible, about "soft clothing" and "kings' houses." He had but the scantiest apology of a wardrobe—a something to invite rather than defy "the windy storm and tempest." He was far from home and friends, and his employment was of a nature exposing him to the severity of the cold. I have often heard my father rehearse with emotion the scenes and sufferings in this trying period of his life. These severe experiences were, doubtless, in the issue,

profitable to him, leading him the more earnestly to seek for himself a better and an enduring substance. They served to impress on him that *unworldly* cast of thought and feeling which characterized him in after life.

I have not by me the precise date of my father's marriage. He was married to Thankful Cobb, daughter of the then late Lieutenant Cobb, of Bennington, Vt., who fell by the side of General Richard Montgomery before the walls of Quebec, December 31, 1775. In the volume entitled, "The Cushman Memorial," her name is found as a lineal descendant from Rev. Robert Cushman of the earliest Plymouth Pilgrims. A little less than a year after the first landing, Mr. Cushman preached, December 12, 1621, a sermon "On the Sin and Danger of Self-love." It was preached in what was called the "common house" of the little

colony. It was the first sermon ever printed in America. It has since been republished. Mr. Cushman's monument, a granite column, stands eminent and chief among the memorials erected on "Burial Hill," Plymouth.

The bridal tour of the newly married pair was characteristic of those times. No railroads as now; no wagon roads, and no wagons tolerable to mortals having flesh and blood. But the party were intent on visiting her uncle, Frederick Cushman, in Georgia, Vt.—name for a place that was to be—nearly ninety miles on horseback! It would have jolted the life out of them, had they attained to *our* ease and effeminacy. Rutland to Georgia, a ride of four hours by rail in *these* times; but *then* it was a journey, on horseback all the way. But the tour was made without complaints and without suffering; they had learned

to endure hardness. May their descendants retain a tithe of that power of purpose to do and bear.

This visit, not unlikely, had its influence in determining them to make Georgia their future home. To this place, in Franklin county, Northwestern Vermont, they came in 1798, with their three small children, Walter being the infant. Here a numerous family, eleven children, grew up around them. The country was new and but sparsely settled, and these new-comers had the common experiences of pioneers. How such a family, in those circumstances, with the limited means and stinted earnings of the father toiling at a hand-loom, were housed, fed, clothed, and schooled, is a mystery and a marvel. The few inhabitants were far from being rich, or what would now be regarded as in *comfortable* circumstances. Their dwellings were rude, their families

large, and their means very limited. Where there was a disposition to lend a helping hand, that hand was weak and nearly empty. With such a family of children, most of them young, my father found it very difficult to obtain the necessaries of life. But they got along, or were *carried* along, with privations indeed, but with patience and cheerfulness; they all, parents and children, having sound health, and a mind to work, and blessed ignorance of luxuries and prodigality. "But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land. And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship: and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

In the family history there were peculiar exigencies, when the wolf Hunger

must have verily seemed to be prowling round the door. To one of those seasons, during the war of 1812, my father was wont to refer with special thankfulness. In the year 1821, the whole family were together for the last time. The visit had been exceedingly pleasant. The hour of separation came, all too soon. Our minister, Mr. Dorman, was present. We were all seated in the north room, and were about to kneel in prayer. Father remarked that, before the prayer and parting, he wished to say a word or two respecting the good hand of our God upon us as a family. He then glanced at a few things in our family history, showing how kindly our heavenly Father had cared for us all along—what seasonable helps we had received, what deliverances had been sent us from unexpected quarters. “We have,” said he, “seen times of great straitness. Using up one

bushel of grain, we were in doubt where the next could come from. But somehow, as the Lord would have it, when that bushel was spent"—and here his utterance choked, and his whole frame shook under the power of his emotions; but he soon recovered, and added, "but somehow, when that was gone, another came, and we were wonderfully provided for, and made glad."

And here, anticipating a little the religious account of him, I may refer to the fact, well known to those who well knew him, that a leading trait in my father's piety was his *gratitude to God*. You saw this in his conversation and in his prayers. It was the air and incense about him. He seemed to have at all times a sweet and glad sense of God's goodness. It was his great theme, and he dwelt upon it, and never seemed to grow weary of it. I have been greatly

struck with this feature. On one occasion, with an interest perhaps more curious than devout, I counted the number of times in which he used the word "mercy" or "mercies" in a single prayer. I was not surprised to find the number to be *eleven*. This sense of God as good, gave to his piety, what it should ever have, a sunny and cheerful cast. I never saw my father wear a sad face one whole day in my life. I was with him when, in August, 1849, the heavy tidings came that his son C——, a Benjamin in the family, had died suddenly at his home in the city of New York. We had been looking for that son and brother by that morning's mail-coach. The stroke was terribly sudden and severe to us all. Father felt it deeply; but he said before night of that same day, "I shall not be *greatly* moved;" and he was not, though no man had keener or tenderer sensibilities than

he, or loved his children with a stronger and purer affection.

From his earliest years, my father had been notedly of thoughtful and serious mind. The Bible was his daily study, and his thoughts were much engrossed with its transcendent themes. But it was not till the age of thirty-five that he made a public profession of religion. He then united with the Congregational church in Georgia, became one of its main pillars, and for more than half a century one of its deacons. He used the office of deacon well, and purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. "Good old Deacon Colton" was the affectionate title by which he was familiarly spoken of in his later years. When infirmities were increasing upon him, he asked to be released from the office. The church unanimously refused this request,

but voted instead to release him from the more active duties.

His early religious experience was somewhat peculiar. He was unconscious of any sudden and strong convictions. He had not, in beginning to hope, the transports of joy of which some speak; it was rather a calm peace, the still, deep stream. There was darkness for a time, but the morning came. He was at one time tempted with skeptical doubts, and betook himself anew to God's word to confirm those doubts. But the result was just the opposite of his intention; and he now found, by a surprising experience, what he had many times read before, that "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." A sense of the Divine goodness and of his own unworthiness, and the claims of God upon him, was by various nurture ripened into Christian strength and steadfastness.

With such an experience, it is no wonder that for a time he looked with misgivings upon sudden awakenings and conversions. But he soon became convinced that "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all;" and so charity became to him a bond of perfectness. He loved revivals, and prayed for them, and labored in them. They were to him a great joy, a feast of fat things. His pastor, Rev. G. W. Ranslow, says of him, that "on such occasions his counsels and prayers were exceedingly valuable. It might be said of him that his face shone with heavenly grace; yet he knew it not. On one occasion of peculiar interest, he said, after a night, much of which, as I afterwards learned, he had spent in prayer for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, "the blessing was let down so low, I believe I have got hold of it." He was never

sanguine of his gracious state, and often made the inquiry, "What have I ever done, which a hypocrite could not do?"

This last remark by his pastor I can qualify. There were indeed this humility and sense of unworthiness; but I can well remember my father's saying to me, toward the close of his life, that he felt *sure* he had trusted, and was now trusting in Christ; that he sometimes had a fear lest his faith might fail him in the act and moment of dying; but that, in reference to any thing *beyond* death, he had no misgivings, not the slightest in the world.

If Deacon Colton had any particular failings—and who has them not?—they must be looked for in the direction of his unworldliness, and his want of economical enterprise and thrift. But it should be remembered that he was a firm believer in God's good providence. He

employed such means as were placed within his reach, and then left the event, without anxieties or questionings, to Him who fed Elijah by ravens at the brook. Tradition has handed down authentic anecdotes, illustrating the firm step with which he walked along the very brink of extreme want, nothing doubting that the kind Hand which had provided, would not be wanting to him and his. At an early day it was customary with the church in Georgia for a few of the brethren and sisters, with their pastor, to meet for prayer and mutual edification, and in a kind and Christian spirit to tell each other their faults, it being agreed on all hands that great plainness of speech should be allowed, and no offence taken. At one of these meetings, the pastor said, "There is Deacon Colton: I have sometimes thought he is not as provident as it would be well for him to be—not

quite as careful to lay up something against a rainy day." The deacon, with great moderation, replied, "Well, as to what our pastor says respecting me, perhaps it is true; very likely it is. And now, since we are in this free strain, our pastor will not take it amiss from me, if I say I think *his* failing, if he have any, lies in just the opposite direction; and that he is a *little too* careful about laying up for the future. And on the whole, I think, if we could strike the *medium between us two*, allowing half B—— and half Colton, it would perhaps be about right."

My father was, I think, in an eminent degree, an unworldly man. He often repeated a saying of John Elliott, "I have made up my mind not to look for any great things from this world." He had all along such a clear and vivid realization of heavenly things, and of his title to them through grace, as made him com-

paratively indifferent to the things of time. He walked by faith. His conversation was in heaven. What the Bible says about the heavenly world he received as true, and he rested on that word with a simple and hearty trust which was rare and wonderful. "Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, he was persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth." I remember his saying, on one occasion, that to him there was great sweetness in the apostle's expression, "that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope."

Deacon Colton had great equability of mind—if not by nature, by a thorough self-discipline. Seldom if ever was he seen in a passion, or in any great mental excitement. Under a strong

provocation, instead of betraying any turbulent emotions, he would say, "I am exercised." I have no recollection of having ever once seen him agitated with feelings of anger or resentment. He "put off all these," if indeed they ever came nigh him. The flint did not hold fire, and there was not much of any such hardness about him. He knew how to give the soft answer which "turneth away wrath." He well understood the proverb, "A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterward." When all around him was tempest of passion, he was calm and self-collected. He had naturally the quickest and keenest sensibilities; but he had self-control, and thus moderation.

He was not only "slow to wrath," but also, in the best sense, "slow to speak." His words were well chosen and few, and were uttered with a deliberate impres-

siveness seldom equalled. He had a voice of rare smoothness and sweetness. He had a keen ear for discrimination of sounds, not in music only, but in speech as well. His modulations and cadences, in speaking and reading, were well-nigh perfect. He insisted that a fine cadence is a positive beauty and power. I well remember his criticisms, on one occasion, upon my own manner of closing the Lord's Prayer—how appreciative and judicious they were. His outward ear and his inner ear caught the most delicate shades of tone. It was in his nature, and it was a result of careful cultivation. In his later years, and, if I mistake not, through most of his life, he did much of his thinking by help of his voice. Hence his mastery in the expressive faculty. The most marked feature in his speech was its brevity, unless I should except the singular precision with which he hit just

the idea he wished to convey. You never had to ask him to *repeat* a remark, that you might better understand it. He went straight to the point, and set it in sunlight. What he could not make clear, he would not essay. He understood that "a straight line is the shortest distance between two points." One who knew him well, testifies of him, that "whenever he spoke, whether in church meeting or in the mixed assembly, he showed a wonderful talent of compression—of saying much in fewest words, and of stopping at the right point, which he soon reached." No man ever heard him "spin out." "Long yarns" may have belonged to his toils, but never to his speech. He was frank-spoken; a plain man, and spoke right on; "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile."

In his religious habits, Deacon Colton

was a pattern of order. Certain hours of every day were set apart for reading the Scriptures, and for private meditation and prayer. These duties were scrupulously attended to, whatever else might be neglected. He often quoted the saying of another, "Crowd not religion into a corner of the day." To the end of his life he was noted for system and carefulness—could always lay his hand upon his spectacles without search or inquiry. He insisted on a strict and orderly observance of the Sabbath, and in this he led the way. Puritan by a long line of pious ancestry, and by his own early nurture, he followed in the footsteps of his fathers. He did not regard the fourth commandment as an elastic, to be stretched indefinitely. He began his Sabbaths right early. Before sunset of Saturday his work was laid aside, and his Bible was taken up. There must be a prep-

aration of the heart, and the Saturday evening sunset found him already in the devout frame. And in this he commanded his household after him. They were not allowed on the Sabbath to mingle with others, nor to stroll along in going to the sanctuary or in returning from it. His children, when young, walked with him to the house of God in company, the daughters at his right hand, and the sons at his left.

The excellence for which Deacon Colton was most known and noted, was his knowledge of the Bible. In this respect he was a wonder. I have never met with his equal. I could never "set" him. Having occasion to write sermons at his home, and not having my Cruden by me, I took father for my concordance, and he never failed me. Hundreds of times I have asked him where such or such a verse, or clause, or expression

was to be found, and he always, without an instance of failure, gave promptly the needed information ; naming not the exact book and chapter only, but often also the very verse. Sometimes he would use a *topical* memory ; thus, "Take Goodwin's Hartford edition of the Bible, and turn to the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, and on the left-hand column, about two-thirds of the way towards the bottom, you will find it." And there it was. You were certain of having the right answer, and that right early. I have many times sought out clauses or phrases for the *purpose* of "setting" him, but I never succeeded in doing it. These great attainments in Scripture knowledge were a thing not hid in a corner. He was widely known for it. I have received letters from superintendents of Sabbath-schools in Boston, Albany, and other places, asking for information re-

specting his Bible knowledge; how he acquired it; when he began; how much he could repeat, etc.; such information being intended for the benefit of Sabbath-schools. I know not how many letters of this kind I have been called to answer. This fame of him was not without its measure of annoyance to him in his declining years, subjecting him as it did to frequent visits from strangers, and to requests for his autograph. *How* my father *attained* to this great knowledge of the Bible, is a question it might be difficult fully to answer. He had, by endowment of nature, a wonderful memory, remarkable for its acquisitiveness and for its retentiveness. He cultivated this gift with most indomitable pains-taking and perseverance. He began very early to commit the Scriptures to memory, and he kept up the habit, daily adding to the store new treasures of the divine word.

The Bible was constantly by him when he was at his work, and those snatches made a grand aggregate. The year in and out found him at the delightful task of storing up "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." He had a divine relish for the *very words*; they were sweet unto his taste. He read them aloud, and repeated them aloud, every day, and almost every hour. He had, with his fine voice, a very impressive manner in reading and repeating. His ear helped his memory. Some of the grand periods of the rich old Saxon, in the Psalms and in Isaiah, as touched by his voice, would come out with a melody and flow, like the sublime strains of the old masters in music. I remember his reading the seventy-eighth Psalm on one occasion. Some of those passages, as rendered by him in his deliberate and impressive manner, had a sustained stateliness like Old Hun-

dred. He loved to hear his own voice, as it caught and gave forth those words of spirit and life. He did not trip with his tongue. The small words were not slurred over. The words were given out from his lips "as beautiful coins newly issued from the mint, deeply and accurately impressed, perfectly finished, neatly struck by the proper organs, distinct, in due succession and of due weight." "The *meaning* of the Bible is the Bible;" and if any other voice has, by its tones and modulations, brought out that meaning with more impressive effect, the instance is not within my recollection.

But what seemed to me most of all wonderful about my father's memory was, that he could still, with ease as aforetime, commit Bible language to memory at the great age of ninety-five years. From about that time, owing to

weakness of eyes, he ceased to commit regularly and in course. In these more formal efforts—acquiring by entire books—he left off with the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel. Then he began to live on his income; and it was ample, and perfectly at command. He had mastered whole books of the Bible—just the words, and without mistake; no new words added; no old omitted. You had n't got the verse, unless you could repeat it right off, without missing one word, great or small. I question if a living man ever heard him attempt to give a verse *for substance*. He gave *the verse*, or he let it alone. It would have tried his patience to hear one repeat *Bible* words blunderingly. Correctness here was part and proof of his reverence for the living oracles. He was for a long time superintendent of the Sabbath-school, an institution which he

highly prized ; and in his deliberate judgment, the best part in sabbath-school instruction is this very exercise—repeating accurately, word for word, some portion of Holy Writ. He remembered, because he read with close attention, marking carefully the sense, and often expressing that sense in language of his own. He was wont to note down with pen or pencil the thoughts which had occurred to him on reading particular passages. Some of these jottings are quite original and striking. A few such scraps were left by him in his large quarto Bible, and are choicely treasured.

My father was a *general* reader. While the Bible was *the* book, he read much else. He read works illustrating the Scriptures. “Hunter’s Sacred Biography” was a favorite. Volumes of sermons by Dr. Strong of Hartford, and Dr. Lathrop of West Springfield, were among

his chosen. He read commentaries and practical notes, but preferred the text. He kept himself abreast with the times. The newspaper had its place and proportion. The religious paper, which he read most, was deemed rather pro-slavery by some, but he had no complacency in the system. He greatly rejoiced at the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia as "the entering wedge." The darkest time in our late war was in the spring of 1863, the year of his death. But he was persistently hopeful for the issue, since right is right, and God is right. He loved and repeated Dr. Watts' familiar lines,

"The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
And give us day for night."

He was to the last as free from the infirmity common to aged people, which locates in the past all the good that was ever to bless the race, as was any one of

his children. He was as heartily in sympathy as were they, with all the great moral and religious movements of the present time. He was blessed with a green old age. His bow abode in strength. His spirits were never soured, and never flagged. He lived in Sunny Side, and in sight of the Delectable Mountains. I have never known a happier man.

And as he read other things besides the Bible, so he stored his memory with their treasures. Once a week, till near the close of his life, he repeated the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, asking and answering the questions, without book and without mistake. On one occasion, late in life, his pastor asked him to offer a few remarks in a church meeting. Father arose, and said he felt rather empty, but he could repeat a *letter* which John Elliot once wrote to his brother, and which he had learned in early life.

He then began, and repeated that entire letter, a long one, and rich in thought; repeated it, probably, without missing one word. He had other things equally well stored away, and ready for use. He had committed to memory seven hundred psalms and hymns, which were always at his command. He used to say that the memory—wonderful power—would carry the greater burden the more it was exercised; that it is like a friend that loves to be trusted; therefore lay the loads upon it without stint or fear.

Any sketch of my father must be very defective, which should not make express mention of his *musical* talent. In this he was gifted in rare degree. I am safe in saying, that in sensitiveness to harmonies in music, the equal of him could scarcely be found among millions of men. For this he was widely known. Traces and traditions of it, in his childhood and

youth, are still to be met with in his native Longmeadow. When a child of only eight years, he stood in the choir by his mother and sang "counter." And he remained constantly in the choir from eight till nearly eighty, and was even then released only at his own urgent request. It was the place for him; and I am persuaded that not many of "the chief singers"—the Asaphs and Jeduthuns—have done more than he for the "service of song in the house of the Lord." Music was a sentiment with him; was a sense; was a soul; was a world. The very sounds themselves, in certain relations and combinations, seized and swayed for the time his every capacity of thought and feeling. Those relations, third, fifth, tenth, etc., his quick ear recognized instantly; and those sounds, striking the inner ear, would keep vibrating there for months

and years. The power over him was wonderful. It was a charm and an enchantment, where the strains were sweet; and he drank in the sounds as one in an ecstasy or trance—caught up, and not knowing whether he was in the body or out of it. You could see him sitting meek and quiet, with head prone and eyes closed and hand upon his face, while his soul, abstracted and absorbed, was in a perfect rhapsody and revel. At such a time he appeared as one completely overcome.

He loved song, the sound and sentiment together. He loved the hymns, the poetry and versification, specially Dr. Watts', as is evident from his committing so many of them to memory. But he loved musical sounds simply. A human voice, of male or female, in simple melody—a voice clear, full, smooth, mellow, rich—was charming to him.

But he was far more captivated by *harmonies*, many parts combined. Instrumental also—"sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music." The bass-viol and the violin were no scandal to him, and troubled him with no unpleasant associations. "To the pure all things are pure." You might say to him that music was nothing without the words. He would not judge you, but he felt differently; and if you pressed the point, his silent answer would likely be, "You cannot understand this matter." A time for every purpose, and to him a time for the ravishment and transport of sweet musical sounds. Was it peculiar organism, nerves, tympanum, instinct, sensuousness, and without moral quality? Granted. But he was so made, so strung and tuned; and to every thing there is a season. Words were well in their

time and place. No doubt of that; but there were times when *music alone*, and for its own sake, was an indescribable charm to his ear and heart. In some such times words, *any* words, were to him but an obtrusion, an impertinence, "right in the way," as I have heard him express it. If any one should infer from this that my father was deficient in keen sensibility to excellence in our hymns, I can only say, that such an inference would be wide as possible of the actual fact. My father's music was a talent, was five talents, which he well employed. It lent help for the church's edification and comfort. It aided to kindle the calm and heavenly frame in the little circles where Christians met to praise and pray. It praised God in his sanctuary, and in the great congregation. But its chief charms were around the domestic hearth; to make him happy in his children, and

to make them happy in their father; to make them love one another; to restrain, to refine, and ennoble souls thus knit together; and to bind all, by a thousand sacred associations, to the old dear home. Oh, those memories! How they come thronging back upon us. Those family singings we had—bright landmarks, green spots, oases.

“How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view.”

And some of those old harmonies, sweet, plaintive, grand, and soul-stirring—Majesty, Lenox, Greenwich, Exhortation, Brookfield, Windham, and many others—sung with almost seraphic raptures by the fathers and mothers in long time ago. When my father was a child, those old “fugueing tunes,” so called, had blossomed, and were in full glory. He could sing them, and he taught them to his children. Other days have come, and

other scenes; but fond memory, "with miser care," still clings to the dear delights of the olden time. The old bass-viol of my father—a sort of family heirloom and ensign armorial, on which my young eyes were wont to gaze with a wonder and awe, as if it had been the ark of the covenant—has fallen to me, and I have it by me in my own Massachusetts home; and now and then, with its magic power, my children aiding, I try, as best I can, to wake again the echoes of those ancient strains. And it should here be added, that it was just like my father not to let his love for *old* harmony hinder his relish for the *new*. When a student in Andover seminary, I carried to him Dr. Lowell Mason's "Boston Academy of Music." My father was delighted with it. He said that some of its tunes, new to him, were as sweet as any thing he had ever heard.

In this connection; I may be indulged in a word respecting my father's *government* of his family. Here he was, I have ever thought, a model of excellence. Like Abraham, he *commanded* his children and his household after him. There were law and authority. There was the rod, applied seldom and judiciously, but thoroughly. There were few words, but we well understood. If there was the old covenant, there was also enough of the new to soften any seeming asperities. There may have been sternness and reserve, but there was also gentleness. We had reverence and fear, and stood in awe of him. And yet we loved him, and could n't help it. Rare combination of firmness and kindness—of severity and goodness. He was cautious and slow in making up his mind; but when it was once made up and declared, *that* was the end of all words with *him*

about *that* matter. I never knew a child of his hang about him to tease him out of a decision which he had once pronounced. We knew better. He was of one mind. It was not a dogged or sullen setness or obstinacy—nothing of this; but it was firmness the most unbending; and it only remained for us to submit and obey. If to any one these shall seem to be incompatible qualities, my answer is the fact and the instance. There may have been rigor in the discipline, but there was in it nothing like roughness or harshness. Father was calm, equable, and cheerful, though not given to many words. There was no sourness that needed sweetening. I have ever thought that, in his training of us, father derived great aid from music. It contributed to affectionateness and cheerfulness. It was “an excellent oil;” and the “smiting,” when it came, did not “break the

bones.” “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”

The children of Deacon Colton have no goodness to boast of. But the covenant-keeping One has dealt kindly by them; has faithfully kept the word of his covenant with them; and under Him, of whom are all things, they owe much to the wise counsels and corrections, the prayers of faith, and the bright example of a godly father and mother. Eleven children—nine sons and two daughters—all spared to mature years; all of them married and settled in life; all comfortably provided for; not one a drunkard, or a profane swearer, or a prodigal; not one ever convicted or even tried before any court for any crime; and all of them professing the faith in which their revered parents lived and have died. “A good man

leaveth an inheritance to his children's children."

In his long and busy life, my father laid up no stores of worldly goods; but he was tenderly cared for in his old age and decline. Called to part with his beloved wife, who died in 1843, the last nineteen years of his life were spent with his daughter and son-in-law, in the same town which had so long been his home. The hospitable family to which he was welcomed, and those filial assiduities shown him with unwearying and cheerful constancy—I am greatly tempted to utter my own mind, and tell, what has many times been told me by my father, respecting the daughter whose gentle ministrations he valued so highly: "She has been to me every thing I could wish from a child of mine. I do not mean to trust in an arm of flesh. I know not what I should do without her. I try to

keep my heart fixed on God, and to wait only on him." These, and many more such expressions, have I heard from my father's lips. To the last, and from the depths of his heart, he regarded the arrangement as signally providential.

And here I will quote a few words from the pen of his pastor, Rev. G. W. Ranslow: "In person, Deacon Colton was of about the medium stature, straight and well formed, with features strongly marked, and an easy and graceful carriage. He had great regard to the feelings and comfort of others—a most delicate sensibility. In the latter part of his life, his hearing became dull; so much so, that he could distinguish but little of the ordinary conversation of the family. Unless personally addressed, he never wished to have any sentence *repeated* for his benefit; and when conversed with personally, he often expressed a fear of

wearying the patience of the speaker.” He was to the last extremely reluctant to be in any way the occasion of trouble to any one. Not for him, if he could help it, should there be a single needless word, or step, or care. His sensitiveness on this point was very remarkable—a delicacy of feeling which none but those constantly about him could fully appreciate.”

Mr. Ranslow then adds: “Deacon Colton exercised the office of *deacon* with commendable discretion and faithfulness; always at his post, ready for every good work; counselling with his minister, and, if occasion required it, admonishing him, but never turning his influence against him. He headed no party in the church, and gave no countenance to plans and movements which gender strife and ill-will. I have ever looked upon him as a model deacon, and was never able to

discover in what respect, on the whole, the model could be improved."

My father was eminently a peacemaker. He well understood human nature and human motives. He read the heart with rare discernment. As has already been said, he had singular delicacy of feeling. He was frank, and often administered reproof; but it was always "with grace, seasoned with salt;" with such godly sincerity, with such meekness and gentleness in tone and manner, as served to win, instead of repelling. Hence his aid was much sought in settling difficulties. "Deacon Colton can bring those brethren together, if anybody can." He made no enemies, and had none. He had his own religious belief and convictions, and maintained them frankly and steadfastly. But he also heeded well the injunctions, "Let all your things be done with charity;" and, "If it be pos-

sible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." He discriminated accurately between the great essentials in religion, and things about which good men might agree to differ. It was a saying of his, that "non-essential things cause the greater part of our unhappiness."

My father had a keen sense of the *humorous* in thought and expression. He might have been a wit, had he indulged an original vein. But this he regarded as a dangerous weapon, to be used cautiously, if at all. He instinctively shrank from giving the slightest pain. A sly touch of something ludicrous, and a twinkle from his eye instantly showed that he saw the thing. And what he could take he could give; a flash, a beam, which you might catch, if you were sharp and quick enough. But there was no sting—no wounding. A pleasantry was better than a "cut."

For any thing like broad humor and the loud laugh he had little liking. Any thing like a rude thrust or a coarse jest I never heard from him. It was n't in his nature, and it was still farther from his Christian principle. "Gentle unto all" was a rule with him, and he would not swerve from it.

But I must draw these sketches to a close.

How holily and unblamably he lived as a disciple of Christ; how consistent and commendable the example he set; how uniform he was, always abounding in the work of the Lord; how well he filled the office of deacon, and how acceptable he was in that office; how his home was a home for Christian ministers; how he loved the Sabbath, and how strictly he kept it; how he loved the sanctuary, and was never absent from it one Sabbath in forty years; how

temperate in all things, and how such temperance ministered to cheerfulness, to health and long life; how tenacious he was of his own religious views, "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and at the same time, how catholic and charitable, ready and glad to hold fellowship with all who call on the Lord, both theirs and ours; how patient and forgiving he was towards any who had injured him; how he valued peace, and followed the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another; how he forbore to use sharp weapons which were ready at his hand; what an Apollos he was, mighty in the Scriptures; what a place he filled in the service of sacred song; how well he ruled his own house; how happy in his family; how esteemed as a neighbor; how conscientiously he discharged his duty as a citizen at the polls;

how sympathizing towards the troubled and afflicted, visiting the sick, and praying with them, and the bereaved, and speaking comfortably to them ; how faithful he was in reproof and rebuke, but with such wisdom and gentleness, giving none offence to any ; how calm and submissive he was in affliction—sorrowing indeed, but kissing a Father's chastening rod ; how lively the interest he took in the common affairs of this life, yet how he kept himself unspotted from the world ; how even the tenor of his way, gently gliding down the stream of life, “looking for that blessed hope ;” how, in his decline, his children and *their* children rose up to do him reverence, and gladly ministered to his necessities ; how calm and clear the afternoon of his life ; how serene and tranquil ; “the coming on of grateful evening mild ;” and how his sun went down without a cloud—

“Set as sets the morning star,
Which goes not down behind the darkened west,
Nor hides obscured among the tempests of the skies,
But melts away into the light of heaven.”

His end peace, and his rest glorious.

He died as he had lived, in the precious faith of Jesus—soothed, sustained, borne upward as on eagles' wings, bright-minded to the last, and with no more fear of death—the first or the second—than of sinking into a common slumber. He breathed his last at the house of his son-in-law, Dr. H. P. Blair, in Georgia, on Monday morning, April 28, 1863,² aged 98 years lacking four months. Two years and a little more, and it would have been 100. Why not the 100? “The number of his months is with Thee; *Thou* hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” The tent was easily struck. He scarcely had disease or pain. The clock-weights touched bottom, and it stopped. On the day previ-

ous, the Sabbath, he expressed his persuasion that this would prove to be his last Sabbath upon the earth; and the thought was grateful and gladdening to him. He had often expressed fear of encountering the last enemy; but when he came upon the field of conflict, he found no enemy there. That enemy had long before been met and vanquished. For sixty years he had "died daily." His triumphant close of such a course was a great event in our family circle—more honorable than if he had been crowned a king. He had received the crown of glory which fadeth not away. He was already among the shining ones,

"With vials full of odors sweet,
And harps of sweeter sound."

I judge that my father must rank among the best singers in heaven.

Summoned by telegraph, I reached my native home on the day after his

death. I was greatly struck on seeing his remains. The face and features so soft and smooth and fair, and looking so young, as if he had not been more than seventy. Perhaps it was a promise that the body should soon rise to immortal bloom and vigor. Perhaps it was a sign that the spiritual part had already put on immortality.

The funeral was at the church on Wednesday. The day itself was most auspicious. Tuesday was a fitful April day; Thursday was dark and stormy; but Wednesday was glorious. A large assembly testified, by their coming together, their love and reverence for departed worth. Rev. C. C. Torrey, acting pastor of the church, conducted the funeral services, assisted by Rev. Alvah Sabin, for many years pastor of the Baptist church in Georgia. An appropriate discourse by Mr. Torrey was from the

text, Rev. 14:13. In opening the solemnities, he gave out the 146th Psalm, L. P. M., remarking as he did so, that this was a favorite psalm with the deceased, and would doubtless be remembered by some who were present, as having been often given out by him in former days, when it fell to him to conduct the services in the absence of a minister. Then the preacher struck the familiar words,

“I’ll praise my Maker with my breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.”

Then the singing of this psalm by the choir; the same choir—for here succession is identity—of which for half a century the deceased had been a leader. The effect of those strains on that assembly can well be imagined. To me they were quite overpowering. It seemed as

if father, though dead, was still speaking to us—was singing to us from the heavenly choir.

We then, “decently and in order,” took up the precious remains, and conveyed them to the burial-ground. It was the last day of April. The snow had disappeared. “The time of the singing of birds was come.” The air was balmy. The declining sun shone clear and warm. In the previous winter months, amid the hoarse moaning of the winds and the drifting of the snows, father had expressed the wish that, if consistent with the Divine will, he might be laid down to his rest in some sunny time, and not when the cold snow was upon the ground. On the Thursday previous to his death, calling his daughter to his side, he reminded her of the wish he had expressed some months since; said he desired to *take back that,*

and any similar expressions of personal preference; and then added: "I have given myself understandingly into the hands of God, with all the circumstances of my death and burial." He had his wish, though he had revoked it; perhaps *because* he had revoked it. Those wishes which are surrendered most heartily are most apt to be answered—that God's will, not ours, may be done. It was a calm, sweet hour towards evening of that beautiful day, when we committed the precious remains of our father to their final resting-place beside those of our dear mother, who, nineteen years before, had gone to glory. We came away from that hallowed spot, our hearts throbbing with varied emotions; sorrowing that we should see his face no more; glad and grateful that we had had such a father, and that he had been spared to us so long; and rejoicing in hope—"for we

know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

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